

**ECOSYSTEM
ROUNDTABLE**



**CALFED
BAY-DELTA
PROGRAM**

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Date: February 27, 1997
To: BDAC Members
From: Lester A. Snow, Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
Subject: Ecosystem Roundtable

The Ecosystem Roundtable, which was formed as a subcommittee of BDAC, has now been working together for several months and this memo provides BDAC members with background, on the mission that the Roundtable will be fulfilling, and on the work that the Roundtable has been doing.

Category III Steering Committee

In the Bay-Delta Accord, the commitment to provide \$180 million for ecosystem restoration projects was one of the vital components. This commitment, which became known as Category III because it was the third element in the Accord package, has led to the implementation of 38 projects. These projects have a total price tag of over \$57 million, of which \$21.7 million was contributed by urban water agencies. This effort was carried out by the Category III Steering Committee which included many of the organizations that were signatory to the Accord. In addition to the task of selecting these projects, the Steering Committee also worked to develop recommendations on a better planning process to select projects, on organizational options to administer the process, and on ways to link the process to the planning efforts of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program.

The Category III Steering Committee came to the conclusion that ecosystem restoration activities should be consistent with the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan being developed as part of the long term CALFED Bay-Delta Program. They also laid out a logical planning process that could take the programmatic guidance from CALFED and use it to systematically select individual projects. While a number of organizational options were evaluated, it was concluded an interim strategy of an Ecosystem Roundtable as a subcommittee of BDAC would be the most expedient way to select projects. The Ecosystem Roundtable is also expected to provide advice on coordination of the many other ecosystem restoration activities taking place in the Bay-Delta watershed.

CALFED Agencies

California

The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal

Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

Other significant events included the passage of Proposition 204 with \$60 million in additional funding for Category III, the authorization of \$430 million in federal funds, and the inclusion of \$143 million in federal funds in the President's FY 1998 federal budget.

Ecosystem Roundtable

The Ecosystem Roundtable was formed in October 1997 and its mission is to provide stakeholder input on the coordination of existing and anticipated state and federal ecosystem restoration and management programs. This includes coordination of CALFED Bay-Delta Program ecosystem restoration and management projects and programs with other complimentary environmental programs being implemented in the Bay-Delta ecosystem as well as providing advice on the integrated planning process to select and implement restoration projects in the next few years.

The Roundtable is interim in nature and is expected to be replaced by other arrangements when the long term alternative is selected. Experience gained as the Roundtable operates should prove useful to the BDAC Assurances and Ecosystem Restoration work groups as they discuss these long term arrangements.

Roundtable Activities

The planning process being used to select projects includes four steps. The first step is the identification of priority species, habitats, and ecosystem processes in an Implementation Strategy which has been the subject of discussion at the last two Roundtable meetings. The next step will be the identification of the limiting factors, stressors, and physical processes that affect those priority resources and the identification and prioritization of actions to address them. This will be summarized in a Workplan which is expected to be available in April. The third step will be the development of a package to solicit projects to implement the priority actions identified in the Workplan. This Project Solicitation package should be available in May. The final step will be development of the list of projects to be funded based on the proposals submitted in response to the Project Solicitation package. We expect this list of projects to be available in July, 1997. Following this first cycle, we expect to regularly update each of these steps so new projects can be selected semi-annually.

In addition to this important task of selecting projects to be funded from the funding sources under the direct control of CALFED, the Roundtable will be providing advice on coordination of the other programs. Techniques used in this coordination can include consolidated requests for proposals, developing shared priorities, regular coordination meetings so each program is aware of what other programs are doing, and recommendations on how to coordinate permitting of restoration projects. This coordination should result in more efficient and effective restoration actions being implemented in an efficient and expedited manner.

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At the March meeting, staff will present additional information on the Ecosystem Roundtable, the planning process, and provide BDAC with a briefing on the progress that has been made to date.